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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ VIOLATIONS OF VISA RECIPROCITY

REF: A) E-MAILS BETWEEN POST AND VO
B) 07 Bishkek 1328

1. (SBU) Summary: Over the past year, post has received reports from U.S. citizens of the increasing difficulties in obtaining Kyrgyz visas. At a June 16 meeting with the head of the Consular Department of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy was informed that foreigners may only receive single entry visas, valid for one month, from Kyrgyz Embassies and Consulates abroad. This is a violation of visa reciprocity between the U.S. and the Kyrgyz Republic. On June 18, post sent Diplomatic Note No. 218 protesting this change in practice and asking the Government of Kyrgyzstan (GOKG) to honor the existing reciprocity schedule. Post noted that if the GOKG continues to issue only single entry, one-month visas, the U.S. will take steps to lower its visa reciprocity for Kyrgyz citizens. End Summary.

2. (SBU) At a June 16 meeting with the head of the Kyrgyz Consular Department, Erik Beshenbiyev, post raised the complaints it received from U.S. citizens. Despite applying for multiple entry visas or visas valid for more than one month, U.S. applicants only received single entry visas. The validity of a Kyrgyz visas determines the length of one's stay in Kyrgyzstan. According to Beshenbiyev, Kyrgyz Embassies and Consulates are only issuing single entry visas to all foreigners in an effort to "simplify" their visas processing. Foreigners wishing to stay longer than one month or receive multiple entry visas can apply after arriving in Kyrgyzstan.

3. (SBU) In contrast to the MFA's current position, over past two years the GOKG has requested that the U.S. extend visa reciprocity for Kyrgyz citizens beyond the current one year, multiple entry maximum. In addition to the issue of reciprocity, U.S. citizens have faced increasing difficulties with Kyrgyz visas. Last year, two U.S. citizens, who had valid visas, were denied re-entry to Kyrgyzstan after the Kyrgyz Border Service began using a new name-checking system. Separately, U.S. citizen contractors working at the Coalition Air Base at Manas have been refused Kyrgyz visas, despite a Kyrgyz diplomatic note in October 2007 outlining the procedures for U.S. contractors to receive Kyrgyz visas (Ref B). MFA Consular Department representatives stated that U.S. contractors are not allowed to live outside of the airbase. The 2001 Diplomatic Note establishing Manas Airbase makes no limitation on where U.S. contractors may or may not live; currently, many contractors live in Bishkek.

4. (SBU) One June 18, 2008, the U.S. Embassy sent the following diplomatic note. Begin text:

The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic and has the honor to inform the Ministry of the following.

The United States Government issues single and multiple entry non-immigrant visas to the citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic which are

valid for three to twelve months. The cost and visa validity period for Kyrgyz citizens corresponds to the length of time and cost of Kyrgyz visas issued to citizens of the United States of America. U.S. citizens have previously applied for and received single and multiple entry Kyrgyz visas valid for a maximum of twelve months.

It has come to our attention that Kyrgyz Embassies and Consulates are only issuing U.S. citizens single-entry visas valid for one month regardless of their requests or stated period of stay.

At a recent meeting with the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Embassy was informed that all foreign citizens may only receive single entry visas valid for one month.

As a matter of reciprocity, we hereby request that the Kyrgyz Republic continue issuing single and multiple entry visas to U.S. citizens for periods up to twelve months. In the event that the Kyrgyz government declines to issue multiple entry visas valid for twelve months, the U.S. will take reciprocal steps to reduce the validity of non-immigrant visas issued worldwide to Kyrgyz citizens.

Visa validity could potentially be reduced to single entry visas valid for one month. Should the Kyrgyz Republic consider extending the validity period of visas issued to U.S. citizens, we would give serious consideration increasing the validity of U.S. visas issued to Kyrgyz citizens in accordance with U.S. immigration law.

End Text

15. (SBU) Post will await a response from the GOKG and continue monitoring visa issuances to U.S. citizens. We hope to persuade the Kyrgyz to resume issuing multiple-entry visas, valid for up to one year to U.S. citizens. If the GOKG does not change its visa issuance practice, post will request that the Department reduce the reciprocity of non-immigrant visas issued to Kyrgyz citizens.

Yovanovitch